

**Board of Forestry and Fire Protection
Range Management Advisory Committee (RMAC)**

Policy Focus Group

**Minutes
July 22, 2008**

Attending:

RMAC:

Representing

Ken Zimmerman	California Cattlemen's Association (CCA)
Mike Connor	Public Member
Clancy Dutra	California Farm Bureau Federation (CFBF)
J.R. McCollister	Public Member
Charles Pritchard	California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD)
Scott Carnegie	California Forestry Association (CFA)
Leonard Hale	Watershed Fire Council of Southern California (WFCSC)
Mel Thompson	California Wool Growers Association (CWG)
Jeff Stephens	CAL FIRE / RMAC Executive Secretary

Members of the Public:

Representing

Karen Buhr	California Association of Resource Conservation Districts
Tacy Currey	California Association of Resource Conservation Districts
Tracy Schohr	California Cattlemen's Association

Items 1 & 2 Call to Order and Introductions:

Ken Zimmerman called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM.

Items 3, Review of the May 2008 minutes:

Minutes not available for review.

Items 4, Draft Paper, Integrating Natural Resource Management in with Resource Conservation Investments:

Ken Zimmerman opened by thanking Tacy Currey and Karen Buhr for their work on the draft white paper. He asked Karen Buhr to relay any additional comments that she received and provide an update on the paper's status. Ms. Buhr stated that she reformatted the paper using the information already supplied in the paper and the reference material provided by RMAC. The draft before RMAC is what makes the "most sense" based on her evaluation of the information available. There are still unresolved data issues such as the 85 million acres found in the 1st paragraph, and the recommendations section. She advised that the next draft should resolve data issues and that RMAC finalize the recommendations section.

Ken Zimmerman noted the use of the words “wildlands” and “rangelands” interchangeably. Tacy Currey stated that CARCD was not able to find a number for grazing lands in the construct of state owned lands. This is why wildlands was used first since data was present for wildlands that would impart in some way the magnitude of the problem of acquisition without management. Ken Zimmerman asked if FRAP data had been consulted. J.R McCollister responded that he did not believe FRAP data had the breakdown of publically acquired lands. Tacy Currey stated that they looked at NRCS data as well, but could not locate a number that would be defensible.

Chuck Pritchard asked for clarification on the \$58 per acre figure. Karen Buhr stated that source information appears later in the paper but that it can be moved to the front for clarification if needed. He also recommended that for consistency that the word “wildlands” be used throughout to avoid conflict with use of the term “rangelands.”

Clancy Dutra questioned the \$58 per acre management cost as being excessive. Ken Zimmerman stated that the cost is likely to be accurate in consideration that it reflects the cost for the state to manage land vs. a private landowner.

Mike Connor recommended examining the larger issues of format and individual sections of the paper in this meeting of RMAC rather than focus on the smaller issues related to word choice etc. Ken Zimmerman agreed. Tacy Currey recommended that if there are other items that support the paper they could be attached as an addendum, and to keep the central points streamlined down into something that is more likely to be read so the message is not lost in too much verbiage. She recommended RMAC identify what are the key “hit-points” that could be developed to a much greater detail in a longer paper.

Tracy Schohr agreed with Tacy Currey’s point on length stating that the letter could state the central issues which are: The State has acquired land without any provisions for management, there is no endowment to develop management, State budgets do not include money for management, and the State continues to acquire additional property without management. Next would be to state these practices should cease, and make recommendations for future management such as returning grazing to these properties. J.R McCollister stated that RMAC has already in previous discussion agreed to a recommendation that the State should not acquire property without provisions for management.

Chuck Pritchard stated that the State should first begin with a justification or reason for acquiring land, followed by provisions for management such as endowments. Mr. Pritchard further recommended rather than use easement for the incentive to manage property, offer removal of the inheritance tax to the landowner as a means of keeping the land in private ownership. Ken Zimmerman instructed all of RMAC to send draft recommendations to Jeff Stephens for compiling and distribution to all Committee members.

Ken Zimmerman asked the CARCD for clarification on whether it was the federal or state tax code that limited the use of bond funds for management purposes. Karen Buhr stated she will double check the reference. Ken Zimmerman then posed the question as to whether the document’s message will be well received by the broader audience that has received circulation of previous drafts. J.R McCollister commented that the general public understands the threat of fire and that this message should be clearly stated in the

paper. Scott Carnegie commented that from the CFA point of view the largest threat to private lands is the federal government, primarily in the form of fire moving from federal to private lands, but this is not mentioned in the paper. Subsequent discussion by RMAC settled on the conclusion that federal lands are a significant threat to both forested and non-forested lands, however, the issue at hand is dealing with state acquired lands.

Ken Zimmerman referred to the letter from the Board to RMAC with instructions for writing the Draft white paper, asking for opinion as to whether RMAC is meeting its assignment. Mel Thompson reviewed some the language in the Board letter stating the Board is asking for recommendation for Board policy on the acquisition and management of acquired State acquired lands. The letter also called for recommended policy that would form the basis of Board policy expressed within the Board's Strategic Plan.

There was discussion regarding the Board's letter and the "Strategic Plan" mentioned in the last paragraph, first page, of the letter. Mel Thompson asked for clarification as to whether the Strategic Plan is in reference to the plan initially recommended by RMAC for the acquisition of State lands or the Board's Strategic Plan. Ken Zimmerman stated that it is the RMAC's proposed strategic plan for acquiring property, and agreed to follow-up with the Board making certain that his interpretation is correct.

Mel Thompson made reference to the section of the RMAC paper "Implementation of a Cooperative Stewardship Strategy" noting what appears to be a contradiction in statements regarding RMAC's intent to develop a statewide stewardship strategy; wording stating that stakeholders would be in opposition to such a statewide strategy. Karen Buhr stated there were emails and other information that formed the basis of this section, and it is a section where she would welcome input in order to accommodate the wishes of RMAC. Mel Thompson recommended that this is the sort of item that needs review prior to the paper moving forward.

Discussion developed that questioned whether RMAC wished to pursue a recommendation for a statewide strategic plan or individual management plans for individual properties. Clancy Dutra spoke in favor of management plans for individual properties. Ken Zimmerman clarified his position that the original concept of a statewide plan was to design methodology for acquiring property and not to serve as a plan for managing properties.

Tracy Schohr stated that currently the state is required to have a management plan before they implement practices due to CEQA requirements. Tacy Currey noted that since money is lacking many properties go without management plans, which is related to why management does not occur.

Jeff Stephens stated his belief that because the Board is asking RMAC for recommendations that will form policy, the paper needs to have one section that is dedicated to concise recommendations for the Board's consideration. Mike Connor and others noted that recommendations occur within the body of the document and that these could be pulled forward and placed in the recommendations section in a concise format. J.R McCollister recommended again that RMAC submit recommendations to Jeff Stephens for compiling and distribution to RMAC. Other discussion dealt with format and the position of text such as recommendations.

Mel Thompson commented that it is more important to focus the discussion on concepts than editing format. RMAC needs to decide on a couple of things. For example, what types of lands are being discussed in the paper for acquisition in general? Page four makes reference to DFG lands, but the land included in the totals may include land held in title or held in easement. Second, RMAC should make a distinction between fee title, easements, donations, etc. Mel Thompson further identified data and reference materials that he believes are in need of investigation such as reference # 1 page 1 that was revealed to be a promotional pamphlet rather than the source document from which the information originated. Ken Zimmerman commented on other references cited such as the Wildlife Action Plan prepared by DFG. He stated that these figures are accurate. Jeff Stephens agreed to investigate reference # 1 and identify the source prior to submission to the Board. Other discussion centered on how difficult it is to find information on ownership contained with data bases that are compatible with one another, as expressed by Tacy Currey. She cited several sources that use different software for storing data layers which makes cross referencing difficult.

Mel Thompson relayed a conversation he had with Jay Chamberlin (formerly with the Resources Agency) stating that data gathered from the Legacy Project is stored at the UC Davis Center for the Environment.

Ken Zimmerman asked RMAC to recap future actions. Mr. Zimmerman stated that he will attend the next Board meeting and present the paper in its most current form as a draft. Recommendations will be assembled by Jeff Stephens and sent to Ken Zimmerman prior to the Board meeting.

Clancy Dutra spoke in opposition to the section on page 6, "Increase General Fund Appropriations and Taxes." He did not favor a recommendation from RMAC that increases taxes. The terms "and Taxes" were deleted from the section title. Clancy Dutra and others also debated the \$58 per acre for managing state lands indicating their belief the figure is too high. Tacy Currey confirmed that the \$58 per acre comes from the DFG Wildlife Action Plan and reflects the cost for government to manage property versus the private sector.

Ken Zimmerman revisited the issue raised by Mel Thompson, that there are different types of ownerships and easements that should be addressed. Mel Thompson cited an example near his property where in one case the ranch remains a working ranch with an easement that impacts management in some way. In another example the property has an easement for wildlife management and is privately owned; however, the land is idle and essentially receives no management. Ken Zimmerman recommended contacting Marilyn Cundiff and asking whether the one million acres cited as DFG ownership includes fee title and easements combined. Tacy Currey identified the issue raised by Mel Thompson as an important question RMAC should answer since it determines how narrow or broad in scope the paper becomes. Mel Thompson recommended that language be included that reflects the difficulty in obtaining data that allows the different types of land acquisitions, purpose, method of acquisition, etc. to be determined. Mike Connor agreed.

Ken Zimmerman stated that RMAC should take a position on whether they agree with the use of easements versus fee title acquisition. Mel Thompson stated that it would be useful to invite someone to RMAC for the purpose of gaining information on the types of

easements being used. Leonard Hale stated that the central issue to be communicated is that for the vast amount of land being acquired there is no provision for management.

RMAC agreed to accept the draft paper with minor revisions as discussed today. A request of Karen Buhr shall be made to revise the paper.

Ken Zimmerman reaffirmed that he wanted all members to submit recommendation for Board policy to Jeff Stephens. These are recommendation for the next phase of the paper, both new and those already mentioned in the draft paper. Jeff Stephens asked that all recommendations be provided by July 29th.

Item 5, New and Unfinished Business:

None

Item 6, Public Comment:

None

Adjourn